

*South East Australia
Civil Marriage Celebrants Association Inc.*

Reg. No. Y1957739

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
P.O. Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing on behalf of our association to make a submission to your inquiry. Our association is based in rural southern NSW and northern Victoria, but also includes some members from more isolated areas, such as Broken Hill and regional South Australia. Many of our members come from smaller isolated areas.

Our association supports:

* the amendments to the Australian Marriage Act 1961 Part IV Division 2 sub-paragraph 42 to add an Australian passport as evidence of the date and place of birth of the party seeking to marry as this removes discrimination against all Australian citizens, especially for those citizens born overseas.

*supports the introduction of an application fee for the processing of all new marriage celebrants.

*calls for the implementing the recommendations of CoCA's comprehensive submission on cost recovery and increasing professionalism. These recommendations are aimed at a cost-effective

and professionally enhancing system for the appointment and ongoing management of the Commonwealth Marriage Celebrant programme.

*proposes minimal staffing of the Marriage Law and Celebrant Section, making the maximum use of the advice and support of the peak body CoCA, celebrant associations and the State Registry Offices. If five yearly reviews of celebrants will cease, surely this will reduce the number of staff required by the Department.

opposes the “Cost Recovery Bill” which will reduce Commonwealth celebrants appointments to only twelve months at a time. Most of our celebrants have many years of experience. Many wedding dates are planned well ahead, often twelve to fifteen months. This would no longer be possible if this system comes into play. Planning and executing a wedding can be a very stressful time, and this move will only add to the stress.

- Opposes the introduction of an annual celebrant registration fee unless this applies to all celebrants. The fee will not apply to staff at State Registry Offices who conduct marriages and are on a salary unlike Commonwealth celebrants. Also marriage celebrants from recognised religions will be exempted from the proposed annual fees. Surely if a fee is to apply, it should include everyone, and not just the civil celebrants.
- Civil celebrants have to undergo mandatory annual Ongoing Professional Development (OPD), but this does not apply to other celebrants. This training is another annual expense which civil celebrants face. Some of our celebrants live in more remote areas and may only do one or two marriages a year. By the time they pay for their annual OPD and the annual registration fee they will be out of pocket.

Yours faithfully,

Lorraine Hoffmann

Secretary